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Book Selection in Time of Depression

LETHA M. DAVIDSON

Librarian, Ames Public Library, Ames, Iowa

HOW can children's book selection during a depression be any different from what it always is?" I asked myself as I sat down to contemplate this subject. Haven't we always checked and rechecked, and thought and re-thought before deciding how to spend our meagre book money? I understand that there are a few libraries in the world which have all the money they want, and whose motto is "Buy! Never count the cost!" But I have never been inside one. All the book selection I know anything about has been born of a combination of poverty and Scotch ancestry.

Book selection is probably the librarian's hardest job, and certainly the most interesting. Although the exercising of critical judgment about books is something that cannot be explained, still there are a few definite principles and even mechanical aids that may help to develop it and keep it always at its best.

Good book selection involves, first of all, constant comparison, without which there could be no judgment of any kind. Book selection would become mere book ordering without it. Comparison of one title with another, of one plot with a sim-

ilar one, of skill in characterization as one author handles it, and another bungles it; all these things are necessary to good book selection and all presuppose a wide reading background, not only of children's books but of adult books as well. Annie I. M. Jackson, writing in the fourth *CHILDREN'S YEARBOOK*, just published, uses the example of *THE GOOD EARTH*, saying that a children's librarian should read it and then go back to children's books of other countries, reading to see whether the juvenile author is able to recreate the atmosphere of the foreign country as convincingly and accurately as Mrs. Buck does.

The difficulty attending good book selection is not so much that the thing is really hard, as that we cannot or do not find time to do it well. Any book, even a children's book, must be read fairly, if the judgment arrived at is to mean anything. The children's librarian who sits down with a pile of juveniles before her, a thousand other things crowding her, people coming in, telephone ringing every five minutes, will almost surely find one book after another "rather mediocre," or "not particularly thrilling," or "somewhat tedious." Her attitude of mind and body is almost exactly opposite that of the child for whom the book was meant. If

*Read at the regional meeting of the American Library Association in Des Moines, Iowa, October 13, 1932. Published under the direction of Miss Eugenia Brunot, Chairman, Book Evaluation Committee, American Library Association.

she had all the time in the world, a quiet corner, and no cares to speak of, she would probably find herself making different comments on every book in the lot. Some she would praise more highly; others she would condemn more firmly. So I think we owe it to the books to give them a fair chance to make their impression on us. We owe it to them to read them thoughtfully, although speedily, and to conceive of each book as an entity, good or bad, before rushing on to the next. Anne Carroll Moore once made this statement to booksellers who had asked her how to improve their methods: "The bookseller who reads children's books comparatively, continuously and intelligently is not lost. An associative memory backed by a discriminating knowledge of books in general, is worth tons of selling points for any real book."

Although there can be certain general standards for all children's libraries, each librarian should have her own set of standards, carefully arrived at, and uniformly adhered to. Her standards will differ from general principles according to the class of people she deals with, the amount of the whole book fund which can be spent for children's books, the state of the book collection when she takes over the work, and her own particular aims for improving the children's room she administers. General practice could be of help to her comparatively in each of these respects, but unfortunately it is hard to find in print any pronouncement on some of these matters.

The proportion of the total book fund to be spent for children's books seems to differ so much that no definite statement can be found in Power's *LIBRARY SERVICE FOR CHILDREN*, Drury's *BOOK SELECTION* or Thomson's *REASONABLE BUDGETS* though this last gives the best information. Thomson says that the average cost per juvenile circulation is two cents and that any library whose juvenile circulation for a year, multiplied by two is more than the number of cents spent for children's books that year, shows a depreciation of the children's collection that

should be remedied. Thomson also states that there should be "one live book" in the collection for every child in the city, which probably compares well enough with the book and a half per person which is a usual standard.

The children's librarian should know what the average cost of her children's books is, and how it compares with that of other libraries. Miss Power is more definite here, for in her *LIBRARY SERVICE FOR CHILDREN* she analyzes a situation in which 1075 books were bought for \$2,000, showing that she considers \$1.85 an average price for all books, including easy books and reference books, the two extremes of price. Experience has taught me that \$1.85 is somewhat higher than is practicable, \$1.25 to \$1.00 being more nearly the average.

The standard most commonly accepted, I believe, is the idea of balance between different parts of the children's collection. Here Miss Power is very helpful, and I would suggest that those who are particularly interested reread the "Children's Book Collection" chapter in her book. She analyzes the purchase of 1075 volumes for a new children's collection in a branch library, and suggests these proportions: fiction 500 books, or roughly half; picture, easy and fairy books, 250, or nearly a fourth; classed books 300, or a little more than a fourth, and reference books 15, or about a tenth.

Strange as it may seem, it is not the defining of standards that is the hardest, though that presents difficulties enough. It is in adhering to standards with which they heartily agree that most children's book selectors fall by the wayside. Standards do complicate book selection, and the tendency is to toss them overboard as ballast when the press of Children's Book Week or the enthusiasm of a buying orgy causes our spirits to soar unduly. It is well to remember that sand bags are put in balloons for a very good reason, and that the best balloonists do the least tossing overboard. We should then develop our own standards, with reference to those commonly accepted, and maintain them

afterward, at least as far as we are able, reading before purchase whenever possible, buying carefully and economically, maintaining balance between groups and allowing for many ages and tastes among our borrowers.

One of the most crying needs of our profession is some scheme for librarians in small, out-of-the-way places to see and examine the children's book output before purchasing. Once a book is bought, "sight unseen," because of the publisher's comment or for some other reason, there is little to be done about it. The small library with limited funds needs little more each year than the one best title, or perhaps two, of each reputable publisher. How shall the librarian find out what those are? The Children's Section of the A. L. A. has this problem in mind, and hopes to be able to arrange some plan of approval buying for even small libraries in the near future. That, by the way, is one of the definite ways in which section membership for the children's librarian can benefit the individual librarian in hard, tangible, dollars and cents. It does seem wrong that the large libraries where money is more plentiful, may insist on and get approval service on children's books, while their poorer neighbors have to struggle along without it.

However the one best thing that can be done as a substitute for the privilege of examination before buying, is to read and evaluate carefully the books after they are bought. Too often we send off orders in a fit of haste and despair, promising ourselves that we will at least have a chance to see what the books are like when they come. But when they do come, Children's Book Week is upon us, perhaps, and we are too busy stringing crepe paper and tying ribbons and making a to-do to have time to read any books. So out they go, and once they are in circulation they mingle with the general collection and are seen no more. This might be avoided by earlier ordering, so that there would be no problem of book selection during Book Week at any rate, but the thing is a Juggernaut

that catches every one of us sooner or later, and we might as well recognize the fact.

The matter of replacement plays a great part in good book selection, and possibly our attitude can be little different now than in easier days. If we have formerly practiced replacing every good, popular book when it was worn out, we can now replace only the very best of the old titles. This should not do the collection any harm, and might possibly do it good. However, I believe that for one librarian who errs on the side of over-careful replacement, twenty will be found who replace too little. The publishers intend to keep the new output ever before us, and they are usually successful in getting our dollars for new books rather than for older titles which are no longer pushed in advertising.

One cannot speak of replacement without mentioning editions, but only a mention can be possible in the short time we have. Some new editions of children's classics and old favorites are a boon. A few entire series can be depended on, with a minimum of variation in quality. The evaluation there is done in the publisher's office by a specialist—one reason why the books cost money. There are other editions widely advertised for their clear type and standard selection which must be watched because of their unevenness. These editions are cheaper than \$2.00—most of them are priced at less than a dollar, and many new titles are added each year. The editing, for example, is often uneven, as is the illustration, and even the size of type is not the same in different books in the series. Selections as in the case of Grimm and Andersen are carelessly made; adaptations as of Robin Hood, King Arthur and Bible Stories are of varying quality, and in some cases a standard short story like *A MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY* forms part of a volume the rest of which is almost worthless. It behooves us to examine before we buy, and not to judge by past performance unless we are sure of our publishers.

Easy books bring down the average

cost, and have to be bought in large quantities, but they are not easy at all from the book selector's point of view. The only easy thing about them is that they can be duplicated more freely than other titles. Evaluating an easy book means trying it against a different and sterner set of standards than applies even to the ordinary juvenile. How does the vocabulary suit the age for which intended? How many infractions of the Gates Word List has the author made? Are type size and line length suitable for the grade? Such things are standardized and the correct answer to each of these questions can be arbitrarily given. But there is also the matter of charm, vitality, originality. Is the book worth reading, even for a first grader? Does it tell a reasonably entertaining story in which children of the intended age will be interested? Or is it of the "Mama see baby. Baby see mama" type? On the market today there are some charming primers and readers, excellently illustrated, quite as useful for 65c as picture books that cost \$2.00. There are also some silly easy books, and some stupidly dead ones. The children will not protest very much if given the not so good, but when you consider all the trouble they have taken just to learn to read, aren't they entitled to the best there is?

Another way to keep down the average cost is to pick up slim, sweet little fairy tales, in flimsy covers at about 45c each, or less. They are usually the acme of uselessness, and are not bargains, but pigs in pokes. Good fairy tales are so valuable a part of the children's collection that poor ones should not be tolerated.

If it were not for their lack of durability, some good children's books could be bought at the ten cent stores, for many books for sale at this price have been prepared with care, and are very satisfactory. Such a book is *THE HAPPY DAY BEGINS*, an almost perfect nursery school book, and there is a dog book, with full page illustrations by Diana Throne, a quite respectable Mother Goose, and a few others. We use a few of the ten cent books in our library, where they wear for about a year

if re sewn before circulation. The small town is different in this respect from the large city. The homes are cleaner and the scramble in the library is less. Things can be successfully done in the small library that would fail in the large. Therefore, this is a good way for the smallest libraries to brighten their easy book collections for almost nothing.

I sometimes feel that children's librarians can be led astray by what they read in books about the matter of duplication. Thomson says in his *REASONABLE BUDGETS*, "Even a small library buys supplementary readers by the hundred and Dr. Dolittle by the half dozen." I am not sure what he means by "small library" but I should say that if any library smaller than 100,000 volumes did, in was poor policy. And too, having readers by the hundred is not buying them by the hundred. They should never be lumped off just because they are for children. Babies are just as much individuals as other people and should have their fair share of attention in book selection matters. I cannot agree with "readers by the hundreds" nor even with "Dr. Dolittle in half dozens." And whatever can be said for duplication in normal times, I should think that cutting down on duplicates would be one way of stretching funds during a depression.

I wonder whether there is a chance to save money in deciding which new titles shall be reinforced. In this matter, of course, the size of the library makes all the difference. Very large libraries will find it economical to buy practically all children's books in reinforced editions. Very small libraries, on the contrary, need not reinforce more than half of their books. In buying new titles they will sometimes do better to buy at first in the publisher's binding, later rebinding or replacing, in reinforced editions, those titles which have proved best and most popular. If a book is seldom or never going to move from the shelf, the publisher's binding is quite strong enough for it. And if, as frequently happens, small libraries must buy "sight unseen" on the strength of an

Early American Writers for Children: Anna Maria Wells

BERT ROLLER

George Peabody College for Teachers

Nashville, Tennessee

WHEN Mrs. Edith Emerson Forbes, daughter of Ralph Waldo Emerson, compiled in 1916 her monumental collection of early popular poems and stories for children, with the title of *FAVOURITES OF A NURSERY OF SEVENTY YEARS AGO*, she gave almost as much space to Anna Maria Wells as to the Taylor sisters of England, in their day the most noted of all children's poets. Although Emerson says nothing of Mrs. Wells in his *JOURNALS*, he does often reveal his interest in the reading life of his children. Like Hawthorne, Alcott, and Whittier, the last our first noted anthologist in the field of children's literature, he had a profound admiration for authors who succeed in the difficult art of creating beautiful books for young people.

Since Mrs. Forbes made her selections almost entirely from the books in the Emerson nursery, we may assume that Mrs. Wells was a popular writer in the Emerson home. This is by no means an achievement to be overlooked. Mr. and Mrs. Emerson were unusually careful of the literature given their children. Modern scholarship, too, as a result of the thorough knowledge of the *JOURNALS* and letters, has shown us that this New Englander, whom we once thought of as a transcendental philosopher only, was not only a forerunner of the modern study of childhood but is perhaps our surest and most brilliant interpreter of the early years of life.

The life of Mrs. Wells, from the little one is able to find in the brief biographies by Griswold and Mrs. Hale, was uneventful. She was born in 1797 in Gloucester, Massachusetts, Griswold claims. Her father died while she was quite young; a few years later her mother married a Mr.

Locke, father of Frances Sargent Osgood, a popular "poetess" in her day, to whom Poe dedicated two of his poems and whose slanderous letter relative to Poe, written to Griswold a few years after the poet's death and published by him without investigation of the charges, helped to establish our shameful misconception of a man whose gallant fight against an "unmerciful disaster" should have won our respect and admiration. Mrs. Osgood is the author of one of the priceless trifles for children which has won a sure immortality—the poem, "Little Things," which begins

"Little drops of water, little grains of sand

Make the mighty ocean and the pleasant land."

In 1829 Anna Maria was married to Thomas Wells, a minor poet to whom Kettell gave some space and too much exaggerated praise in his *SPECIMENS OF AMERICAN POETRY*. Almost immediately after her marriage she began writing for children. Her poems appeared for many years in the "annuals" and juvenile magazines. Her *POEMS AND JUVENILE SKETCHES*, published in 1830, the same year in which Mrs. Hales' noted volume appeared, was an outstanding contribution to children's literature.

Unlike her more popular contemporary, Mrs. Sigourney, Mrs. Wells is never morbid or sentimental. She dignifies her young people by giving them simple names, disregarding entirely the flowery, absurd Della Cruscan habit of using beautiful Italian names for American girls and boys. She has gayety and sprightliness; at times humor. She is so good, in fact, that one studying children's literature is surprised at the fact that she is no longer known.

*Typical Poems for Children by
Mrs. Wells¹*

The punctuation of the poems is that employed by Mrs. Wells in the first publications.

THE FLY AND THE RAINDROP

One warm summer morning,
A very small fly
Was dancing and buzzing
Around in the sky.

"See!" said the little fly,
"What I can do!
While I dance on my wings
I can sing with them too."

From a cloud that was passing
Fell a raindrop,
And swallowed the poor little
Buzzing fly up.

"Oh!" said the little fly,
"What shall I do?
This is the strangest thing
Ever I knew."

The thunder-cloud burst
And came down in a shower,
And the drop with the fly in it
Fell on a flower.

"Oh!" said the little fly,
"What shall I do?
I should be as well off
With no wings as with two!"

The flower grew low
By the side of a brook,
And into its waters
The raindrop she shook.

"Oh!" said the little fly,
"What shall I do?
My wings and my body
Are wet through and through."

Away ran the little brook
Faster than ever,
And tumbled the fly and drop
Into the river.

"Oh!" said the little fly,
"What shall I do?
Where am I going?
I wish that I knew."

The river rolled on,
With a mighty commotion,
And emptied the little drop
Into the ocean.

"Oh!" said the little fly,
"What shall I do?
The world is all turned
Into water—'tis true."

There came a great fish,
With a fierce-looking eye,
And he snapped at the drop
For the sake of the fly.

"Oh!" said the little fly,
"What shall we do?
If the fish swallows you,
He will swallow me too."

The wave then broke
With a mighty shock,
And left little fly
On the top of a rock.²

And a sunbeam, that saw
What was passing down there,
Drank the drop,
And the fly was as free as the air.

"Now," said the little fly,
"See what I'll do!"
So he shook his little wings,
And away he flew.

OVER THE BROOK

Over the brook to grandmamma's
Over the brook, little boy;
The flowers are sweet
Beneath our feet,
We'll sing as we go, for joy.

¹ From "Favourites of a Nursery."

² This stanza was added to the poem by Mrs. Emerson.

Some Aspects of Growth in Written Expression

WILLIAM C. HOPPE

Bowling Green State College, Bowling Green, Ohio

(Continued from March)

IN addition to the analysis of sentence structure, reported in the March issue of this journal, certain aspects of the content of children's written expression provide evidence indicating significant development in language ability during the elementary-school grades. In the present article data concerning content of written expression will be presented.

The first body of evidence to be considered is that relating to the apprehension of word meaning. Three types of data will be presented: (1) unanalyzed word complexes, (2) pretentious use of words, (3) generality of meaning of nouns.

All normal children clearly apprehend a great many words in oral speech long before they begin to write. Even with considerable experience in writing, however, many children betray failure in the correct apprehension of some words. Such failures have here been designated as unanalyzed word complexes and are classified in four categories illustrated below.

1. Improper compounds: *girlfriend*, *tipover*, *bothways*, and *roundring*.

2. Words having attached to them prepositions or *to*, the sign of the infinitive: *hasto*, *hafto*, *usto*, *alota* (a lot of), and *kinda*.

3. Undifferentiated verbal symbols: *prnner*, *prittner*, *forentance*, *inorder*, and *a nother*.

4. Substitution: *next stor* (next door), *must of*, *once and a while*, and *other*.

The young writer's difficulty in some instances appears to be a faulty perception which leads to a corruption of words as in *hasto* or *alota*; in other instances it appears that there is complete misunderstanding of meaning as in *must of* and *where is*

(whereas).

It is hardly credible that children should continue indefinitely in misapprehending common words without suffering intellectual confusion, social embarrassment, and the handicap of inefficient habits. As a means of facilitating mental operation it seems clear that all difficulties in the discrimination of individual words in oral speech should be anticipated as far as possible and the accepted and conventional form be established as early as possible. The essential emphasis here is to avoid learning socially unacceptable forms which later must give place to new learning of the conventional forms. No doubt most of the training implied should be done before written expression is undertaken at all. The fact that evidence of misapprehended words appears some time after children have begun to write intensifies the demand for most critical scrutiny of early efforts at writing to detect error at its first appearance.

A second body of data concerning the apprehension of word meaning may be characterized as pretentious use of words. The following sentences contain examples of the type.

I put ice in the pail and to my *discovery* the ice stay on the top.

Pasteurizing is to kill the *Bacteria* germ.

Some people like winter better than summer partly because of the winter sports in which they may *partake*.

For most of last week I did nothing, but Sunday, *however*, friends took me to the Euclid Hills Golf Club.

The foregoing quotations contain words which seem to indicate that the writers were striving to extend the range of their expression and to enrich its con-

tent, but their effort clearly betrays either a vagueness of conception or unfamiliarity with the precise meaning of the word.

The fact that all examples of the type here quoted were found in the upper division of the fifth grade or in the sixth grade may be very significant. Are these pretentious uses of words an evidence of a budding ambition to assume the forms of adult expression, or do they merely signify the attainment of sufficient facility in the mechanics of handwriting, spelling, and other formal aspects of written expression, to allow some freedom and experimentation in the choice of words? If a peculiar interest in the acquisition of new words, or "big" words can be shown to appear at a particular stage of the child's development, the fact would have considerable significance for language teaching including reading as well as expression.

A third aspect of the apprehension of words is generality of meaning. More than fourteen thousand nouns occurring in children's compositions were classified in six categories of generality of meaning. The first category represented simple objects or acts, such as, *house*, *Dad*, *water*, *jump*. The sixth category included very general comprehensive terms having a connotation of universality of meaning, such as *truth*, *life*, *nature*, *death*. The other four categories represented intermediate degrees of generality of meaning.

The proportions of the more concrete meanings represented by the first and second categories were found to decrease consistently from lower grades to higher. The proportions of the more abstract meanings represented by the fourth, fifth, and sixth increase from lower to higher grades with equal consistency. The evidence points clearly to the conclusion that older children use a smaller proportion of concrete nouns and a larger proportion of the more abstract type than do younger children.

Substantive ideas expressed in writing develop materially between the third and sixth grades in their scope of application. Younger children use in greater degree than do the older ones the specific concepts of concrete objects present to sense and partic-

ular, personal, individual acts, largely of the here-and-now sort. Older children use in greater degree than do the younger ones the more abstract and more extensively generalized meanings. One line of growth, then, clearly discernible in written expression of children is toward greater generality of meaning in substantive ideas. It is significant that some use of the highest type of meanings was made by the children of the third grade. The course of development, therefore, in the aspect of mental life under consideration, is change in degree, not in kind. By the time children have attained ability to express their ideas in writing they have already extended generalization in at least a few experiences to a high degree. The avenue of escape from the limitations of thinking in individual, particular, and concrete terms is already open to the broader applications of generalized meanings.

A second class of data concerning the content of children's compositions is represented by evidence of ego-centrism. The use of the personal pronoun *I* as the subject of the initial sentence of the composition was used as a measure of ego-centrism. In the writing of third grade children more than 55 per cent of the initial sentences contained *I* as the subject, whereas in the sixth grade the percentage of similar usage was less than 25. The difference between these two percentages represents a distinct decline in the prominence of *I* in the thought expressed in writing, and a corresponding increase in impersonality in thinking as the writer advances in school grade.

Assuming the desirability of cultivating the wider range of interests, it seems evident that the tendency in the child's thinking toward greater emphasis on other persons, things, places, actions and events, that is, a more objective outlook, should be cultivated as extensively as possible. The obvious implication of the desirability for stimulating objective thinking is that abundant opportunity must be provided for children to do thinking and to express their thoughts about meaningful, impersonal subjects. That is, the subject mat-

ter for language training is the subject matter for general intellectual training, the so-called content subjects—literature, history, geography, and natural science.

There are of course abundant reasons for including also experience in writing personal letters and in relating incidents with whatever degree of embellishment the writer's imagination may suggest. The quality and degree of imagination expressed in certain types of writing certainly represent an important aspect of the content of expression. Although no adequate measure of imagination was available for use in analyzing the material used in the study, two types of evidence indicate a distinct growth in imagination during the elementary-school years.

One set of compositions was written with the purpose of telling a good story, either real or imagined. The children were given such "starters for stories" as the following:

Mother said that she would be gone only a minute.

I thought the water was only knee-deep when I started to wade.

No directions were given concerning titles. The tabulation of the number of papers having titles showed a striking increase from grade to grade between third and fifth. The irregular trend which appeared in the sixth grade papers could not be explained.

A second evidence of growth in imagination was obtained from careful examination of a tabular classification of all titles used. The table is much too elaborate to be reproduced here, but an examination of it pretty clearly shows development in the imaginative quality of titles. Quite simplified and somewhat accentuated, the scale of development from third to sixth grade may be suggested by the following:

Grade III. My Story

Grade IV. What I Did While
Mother Was Away

Grade V. Mother's Surprise Party

Grade VI. A Minute Too Late

Although these were actually used in the grades designated, not all titles used in the sixth grade were as good as the one quoted, nor were all used in the third grades as poor as the example cited. However, the evidence indicates that there is development in imagination in the written expression of children of elementary-school grades as well as in numerous other particulars.

Our language itself is far from perfect. The child who says, "goed" and "gooder" is using more rational forms than those which society insists upon his learning. The extent of the mental handicap and emotional injury which result from the difficulties in learning the imperfect and irregular forms in language has not been accurately determined. It obviously is sufficiently great to lend considerable support to any movement for the scientific improvement of language. Such improvement would constitute a corresponding improvement in powers of thought.

Assuming a perfect language, it obviously would impose considerable difficulty upon the child to learn to use such a complex instrument. Any facility which could be provided to accelerate the acquisition of language ability would contribute to his intellectual efficiency. With our imperfect language it becomes still more vital for the development of a child's language ability to be facilitated and accelerated as much as possible toward the attainment of a fully mature system of expression.

The evidence presented in the foregoing paragraphs is sufficient to demonstrate that significant development does occur between the third and sixth grades in children's written expression. This development, furthermore, is capable of analysis into a number of specific phases, each of which represents to the elementary teacher both a challenge and some suggestion of the nature which the training program must take in order for it to facilitate the development of children's language ability.

Dickens in a One-Room School

JESSIE DUNSMORE

State Board of Education of Connecticut

and

MARGARET BRICKLEY

Riverside School, Oxford, Connecticut

Foreword: The Status of Reading

TRULY the Age of Reading is upon us. The driving purpose of the young child is that of finding out about his environment and of adapting himself to it so that satisfaction results. The child soon discovers that reading is a valuable aid to carrying out his plan. He is aware that books bring him information—if the right kind of stories and poems are told and read to him.

The advance in the mechanical production of printed matter, together with the general increase in demand for it, has resulted in a vast amount of general reading. Millions read today where in the past only a few had the time, facilities and the necessity for reading. Evidences about us are the scores of morning papers delivered to our homes, and the increasing number of magazines flaunting before competitors such boasts as: "Over 3,000,000 circulation weekly."

These facts are significant for us as teachers as well as significant to the boys and girls. They result in creating in more children a sense of the importance of reading, and they result also in two insistent demands upon the school program. The first of these is for much reading, since much reading is an essential condition of full, complete development of the child. The second demand is for the formation of habits which insure that the child's reading will be varied, discriminating and continuous throughout life.

Reading is a needed tool basically related to everything the children do in an activity school. What is the teacher's part in such a school?

1. To create the atmosphere which stimulates children to desire to read more and better books.

2. To help the children to realize the value of reading so they develop strong motives for it.
3. To guide the children in their efforts to learn to read so that they avoid forming habits which will handicap them, and so that they will acquire skill and lasting interest in reading.

—Jessie Dunsmore.

A Reading Activity

DURING the month of March, my school supervisor brought to my school a yard of glazed chintz which pictured scenes from THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP. Some of the younger children (fourth and fifth graders) were there and she asked them to run away while she showed me something that they would see on Monday. There was a good deal of fun connected with this part. The children reluctantly went a little distance, for this touch of mystery excited their curiosity. They wished to know that evening what she brought. When they left for home, I hung up the chintz, choosing a place in the room where the light was good.

On Monday the children examined the chintz and asked many questions in regard to its meaning and the reason for hanging it up. At first, my answers to their questions were limited in order to keep their interest for a longer period of time. Then too, I really did not know very much about it.

Finally, the children began to call attention to smaller pictures within the large one, such as candlesticks, lamp, mantle-piece, and the like. I suggested that a story was represented in picture form. Many questions were asked. "Have we

the story in school?" they demanded. And "Have we ever read any books by this particular author?" I answered that they had not read any but had acted one, *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*, as part of their Christmas entertainment.

The following day we secured from the Derby Public Library several of Dickens' works, among them: *DAVID COPPERFIELD*, *DOMBEY AND SON*, *OLD CURIOSITY SHOP*, *OLIVER TWIST*, *THE CHILDREN OF DICKENS* by Crothers, *THE CHILD'S DAVID COPPERFIELD* and *OLIVER TWIST, STORIES OF CHILDREN FROM DICKENS*, and *DAVID COPPERFIELD RETOLD FOR CHILDREN* by Jackson.

The children started to read these books in their spare time to see which story was represented on the chintz. By this time interest in Dickens' books was so high that some continued to read all that we had. Some children read only those they became interested in. The story voted as the most enjoyable was *DAVID COPPERFIELD*. During reading class a study was made of the life of Dickens.

The number of books read by my group of fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth graders follows:

Grade VIII	
Tony	1
Josephine	4
George	4
Dwight	3
Total	12
Grade VII	
Eugene	4
Emmett	1
Total	5
Grade VI	
Marian	3
(2 versions)	
Winifred	2
Total	5
Grade V	
Florence	2
(1 version)	
Suzanne	3
(2 versions)	
Total	5
Grand Total	27

—Margaret Brickley.

BOOK SELECTION IN TIME OF DEPRESSION

(Continued from page 118)

author's reputation, it will be wise not to buy a reinforced book at first. If the title turns out to be poor it cannot wear out too soon; if good, it can be replaced in a better edition.

These random thoughts on saving money seem to be leading to one conclu-

sion; that since conditions in libraries of various sizes affect economy methods so greatly, we can only go ahead as seems best, keeping a wary eye always on the lookout for new ways to stretch the book budget without doing violence to our standards of selection.

Research in Elementary Language*

A Report on Problems and Progress

HARRY A. GREENE

Bureau of Educational Research and Service
State University of Iowa
Iowa City

(Continued from April)

Section IV. *Development and Evaluation of Methods*

THE determination of efficiency in methods of teaching is dependent upon answers to the problems of point of view and content and placement of the subject matter units. Subject matter must be determined and evaluated before the best ways of teaching can be found experimentally.

The problems of method have been subjected to considerable investigation. The formal grammarians had a method. For years it was thought to be effective until someone found that mastery of the formal rules of grammar did not carry over sufficiently in the individual's functional use of the language. Recently evidence has been piled high to show that sheer mastery of a rule of language does not at all insure that it will function. Equally significant is the fact that many persons having no conscious knowledge of the rules of grammar use excellent language. All of this serves to raise some rather serious questions concerning method which can be answered only through extensive experimentation.

The following completed studies and projects now under way under the writer's direction appear to fall under this general classification of problems.

A. *Studies in Method of Teaching Language*

1. *Anderson, Arthur C., The Results of a Specific Supervisory Drive on Language. Master's thesis (project under way but not completed).

The study involves the analysis of the results of a specific supervisory drive on language instruction to be conducted in grades four, five, six, and seven of a typical consolidated school in Iowa during one semester of a school year. Selected standardized tests and drill

materials in language will be used to supplement routine instruction. One of the significant outcomes of the study will be an objective record of what it is possible to accomplish in the improvement of language instruction when a special drive is made on the subject.

2. *Bankson, Henrietta, Pupil Usage as Related to Recognition in Punctuation. Master's thesis (project under way but not completed).

This study proposes to determine the relation between the pupil's voluntary usage of punctuation situations in his own written production and his ability to recognize certain correct and incorrect usages in a testing situation. It is part of an attempt to discover the answer to the question of whether pupils make certain language errors because of carelessness and indifference, or because of real lack of mastery. This study, which will be carried on with over 400 pupils in grades ten, eleven, and twelve, is based fundamentally upon an analysis of a series of three themes which will be collected from each pupil and analyzed critically for composition errors. Parallel with the writing of these themes the students will respond to a test over an extensive list of punctuation usages. The data from these two sources will be analyzed and compared critically for each pupil.

3. *Esslinger, R. W., An Evaluation of the Instructional Effect of a Specific Type of Language Drill Material. Master's thesis, (project under way but not completed).

This investigation has as its chief purpose the evaluation of the effect of the use of a specific type of language drill material on class achievement when used under typical classroom conditions. Since the experimental work involved in this study will attempt to control all other classroom conditions with the exception of the introduction of the drill, the results should reveal the relative efficiency of these two types of procedure. The experiment will take place in grades four and five in a selected group of public schools. These grades are selected because they represent the period

*Presented before the meeting of The National Conference on Research in Elementary School English, Minneapolis, Feb. 27, 1933.

in school during which most of the language skills are being developed.

4. Ortmeyer, Wm. A., *Relation of Punctuation Rules and Practice*. Master's thesis, 1932.

This investigation attempted to answer the following pertinent questions regarding the general problem of improving punctuation ability: Does the knowledge of a punctuation rule consistently carry over into the correct use of the rule and conversely? The data for this study were obtained from 516 eighth grade school children in thirteen different school systems.

5. Qualley, L. E., *The Effect of Teaching Specific Punctuation Rules on Punctuation Usage*. Master's thesis, 1931.

This investigation was an attempt to discover the degree to which control over specific punctuation rules transfers into punctuation usage. It attempts to answer two specific questions: (1) To what extent do pupils improve in their usage as a result of studying rules? (2) To what extent do pupils improve their control over rules by their study of them? One hundred fifty-four pupils in ninth and tenth grades were used in this experimental study.

- 6 *Trieschman, T. B., *The Relation of Mastery of Specific Grammatical Rules and Verb Usage Covered by Them*. Master's thesis (project under way but not completed).

The relation of mastery of usages and rules covering these usages is a problem which has long interested the grammarian. This investigation which supplements another series of studies in capitalization and punctuation is designed to show the relation of mastery of specific grammatical rules and the verbal usages covered by them. Such a study involves the use of a series of carefully prepared tests covering the fundamental grammar rules and equally reliable series of tests covering the specific verb usages involved. In this particular investigation it is proposed that approximately 500 students in grades seven and eight be utilized. Judging from previously collected evidence on this general problem it seems quite likely that this investigation will substantiate the general opinion that mastery of a specific rule in grammar and the usage covered by it bear little relation. If this conclusion is substantiated then it appears obvious that the emphasis in language instruction on the units covering correct usage of verb forms has been misrepresented. This should point the way to the reorganization of instruction in these units.

7. Quam, N. E., *Effect of Special Drill on the Elimination of Certain Punctuation Errors*. Master's thesis, 1932.

The aim of this study was to evaluate the efficiency of drill in the elimination of punctuation errors. This experimental study was based upon data from 198 sixth and seventh grade pupils in six school systems in Iowa. It compared results from a specially constructed set of drills covering thirty punctuation items with results obtained under traditional methods of teaching.

8. Williams, Harold J., *An Evaluation of Certain Practice Exercises in Language Teaching*. Master's thesis, 1930.

The specific problem of this study was the determination of the extent to which a specific type of drill material, when used in connection with the regular classroom instruction, aids in the elimination of certain language errors when compared with regular classroom instruction without the drill.

B. *Further Suggestions for Research in Methods of Teaching Language*

The limited number of studies on methods of teaching elementary school language listed in the preceding pages of this section is a good indication of the amount of research work which remains to be done in this field. As a matter of fact, only a few of the more simple and obvious problems of method have been attacked. The following suggested list of projects for investigation is brief but disturbing. Some of the most difficult of all of the elusive problems in language are listed here. This is possibly the reason why they have not been answered before. It is planned that this program shall proceed along these general lines as rapidly as conditions will permit:

1. The Collection of a Cross-section of Materials and Methods Which Successful Language Teachers Use.
2. The Knowledge of Grammatical Rules Governing Modifiers as Related to Pupil Usage.
3. The Effect of Teaching Rules for the Use of the Hyphen on Spelling Accuracy of Certain Selected Words.
4. The Use of Models in Theme-writing and in Letter-writing.

5. The Use of Models in Oral Composition.
6. The Determination of the Relative Efficiency of Drills versus Rules in Language Teaching.
7. The Optimum Organization and Methods of Presentation of Language Drills.
8. The Determination of the Amounts and Types of Drill Necessary for Mastery of Specific Language Usages at Various Ability Levels.
9. The Evaluation of Self-help Drills versus Teacher-correction of Items.
10. The Effects of Specific Isolated Drill on Ability in Written Composition.
11. The Transfer of Oral Language Drills to Written Composition.
12. The Transfer of Learning in Related Language Skills.
13. The Problem of Interference in Related Language Skills.
14. The Relation of Sentence Structure and Punctuation Abilities.
15. The Effect of Theme-reading and Corrections.
16. The Relation of Organization in Reading to Language Organization.
17. The Development of Organization Ability in Language.
18. The Development of the Language Consciousness.
19. The Lag of the Mechanics of Language.
20. The Significance of Extent of the Lag Between Oral and Written Language Abilities.
21. The Effect of Interest and Need upon Language Mastery.
22. The Effect of the Use of the Typewriter on Pupils' Ability to Express Themselves.
23. The Influence of the Foreign Inheritance on Pupils' Usages in English.

Section V. The Evaluation of Achievement in Language

THIS specific field of research involves the problems of developing more effective (more detailed, valid, and reliable) measuring instruments for the measurement of achievement in the various phases of work in English language. The two major problems recognized here are first, the improvement of the content of the tests, and second, the improvement in the techniques of measurement. The approach to the answer to the first of these large problems undoubtedly lies in the field of curriculum research and improvement. Tests suitable in content and adequately analytical in character can not be made in any subject until the basic skills are definitely identified and units of instruction on these skills incorporated in the curriculum. Some progress has been made in the attack on these major problems by undertaking studies of the following types:

A. Research in the Measurement of Language Achievement

1. Ballenger, H. L., *The Validation of the Iowa Elementary Language Tests*. Doctor's dissertation, University of Iowa, (University of Iowa Studies in Education, Vol. VI. No. 3, 1931).

The study involved the construction and critical analysis and evaluation of a battery of specially constructed test exercises designed to locate and measure objectively the various language skills.

2. Bunch, J. P., *An Analysis of Certain Standardized Language Tests*. Master's thesis, 1929.

This problem had as its main purpose the identification of the language situations and word forms of sufficient importance to warrant inclusion in a large sampling of language tests. Fifteen standardized tests were selected and analyzed in detail. Tables showing the frequency of use of each of the language situations and the precise word form appearing in the test constitute the chief contribution of this study.

3. Bontrager, O. R., *Certainty of Response as Related to Accuracy in a Specific Language Test*. Master's thesis, 1930.

This study is an attempt to discover the existence of evidence concerning a language consciousness. Specifically, it attempts to find the answer to this question: What is the relation of certainty of response to accuracy of response in a specific language test involving the correct use of sixty-four verb forms? In responding to this test, which was given to 268 sixth grade pupils and 312 seventh

grade pupils in ten different school systems, the students were required to indicate the degree of certainty which they felt in answering each of the test items. In spite of the fact that there is the expected positive relationship between accuracy and certainty, the relatively large number of items answered incorrectly which were marked by the pupils as positively right, was too large to warrant the assumption that the development of a language consciousness with respect to verb forms is anywhere near adequate.

4. *Davitt, Naomi, *The Error Quotient as a Criterion for Tests in Capitalization and Punctuation*. Master's thesis (project under way but not completed).

This study proposes to validate certain language test items in the field of capitalization and punctuation by checking test content for the types of errors made by pupils in their written work. In this way it is hoped to discover whether capitalization and punctuation tests are really measuring the types of abilities which the pupils themselves demonstrate. If a real relationship is found to exist between errors made by pupils in their written work and the types of skills tested in the tests, evidence of validity will be established for the tests. Investigations will be conducted with pupils in the sixth grade and will involve a very intensive sampling of composition work from a relatively small number of pupils over a long period of time. Only pupils of normal intelligence will be included in the study.

5. Spaulding, E. R., *A Critical Study of Two Methods of Testing Punctuation*. Master's thesis, 1930.

This was an experimental study in testing technique, and involved the construction of two punctuation tests, identical in content but using different objective forms. The data for the investigation were obtained from 508 pupils in grades seven, eight, and nine in three school systems. The significant outcome of this study was the conclusion that the recogni-

tion-correction form of the punctuation test was just as valid, showed a significantly higher reliability, and was much more conveniently and economically scored by the teachers, than was the proof-reading test over the same material.

6. Stickney, George E., *Comparison of Two Objective Methods of Testing Language Usage*. Master's thesis, 1930.

This study was designed to present an experimental evaluation of two testing techniques for use in language testing. In this study the multiple-choice and recognition-correction types were compared as to relative validity, relative reliability, relative difficulty of items, time required for writing the test, and the time required for scoring the test. The data were obtained from 600 pupils in grades seven and eight in five city schools. The evidence from this study shows that the recognition-correction type of test is equally valid, slightly more reliable, and a great deal more economical from the standpoint of student and teacher time than the multiple-choice form over the same material.

B. Supplementary Problems in the Measurement of Language

In addition to the projects under way or completed in the local research program the following problems in the field of the measurement of achievement in language are outlined and ready for investigation as promptly as personal and economic conditions permit. In each of the topics suggested many minor problems are involved.

1. The Relative Validity, Reliability, and Economy of Various Methods of Measuring Language Abilities.
2. The Construction and Validation of Comprehensive Tests over the Formal Grammatical Aspects of Language.
3. The Development and Validation of a Series of Oral Composition Scales.

Conclusion

In concluding this rather lengthy presentation of a local research program in elementary language it seems necessary to repeat one or two comments made earlier in the report. In the first place, this is a report on a program of research which is quite largely personal. The problems discussed are those which have appealed to

the interest of the individual directing their investigation. The projects reported are limited to those which have come under the immediate direction of the writer. Doubtless numerous other creditable pieces of research in English have been produced by other workers on this campus and on others which are not included here. How-

ever, this very fact precludes their inclusion in a report of a program of research such as this purports to be. Much of the detail of this research program necessarily has been delegated to graduate student assistants, in many cases not too well trained in the techniques of research or in the content of the subject matter field. The types of problems which have been completed and the various projects now under way are in many cases makeshifts which have been devised to meet the needs of the graduate research student for a thesis and at the same time to furnish a partial answer

to an important question of content or method in language. The program itself is obviously incomplete. Many of the easily recognizable gaps in the projects proposed for investigation will be closed as the necessary time, money, and opportunity permit. With these limitations in mind this report is submitted in the hope that it may afford a stimulus for thought, a basis for constructive criticism and careful research on the part of others interested in the improvement of the teaching of elementary school English.

DISCUSSION OF DR. GREENE'S REPORT

Editor's Note: The following outline was sent, together with Dr. Greene's report, to all discussion leaders. It was hoped, by calling attention to questions recently raised concerning the validity of results of much of the research in elementary school English, to invite close scrutiny of the report. It was desired, too, to find through this discussion not only important conclusions that may have been reached, but also to search out problems requiring further investigation. It was especially desired to formulate a problem suitable for further investigation and program discussion next year by this group.

To discussion leaders:

I. Lyman in the introduction to his *ENRICHMENT OF THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM*, speaks with some disparagement of English investigations of the past that purported to be objective and scientific. He comments in effect as follows upon an intensive examination that he made of 264 investigations in grammar, language, and composition:

- (1) The investigations were imperfect and primitive in method;
- (2) Factors to be measured were not accurately isolated;
- (3) Devices employed in measurement were not adequate;
- (4) Data themselves crude and empirical were often used in an intricate statistical scheme;
- (5) The investigations generally were open to the suspicion of fallacy because the investigator, although measuring only

educational products, assumed, in doing so, that the tenuous processes of the mind were being checked and evaluated.

He concludes, in effect,

- (6) Since this phase of scientific study is so new, with empirical working procedures, and results largely tentative, the conviction grows that the expert judgment of one or more authorities may be of greater value than conclusions derived from inadequate measurement.

II. Of course, Dr. Lyman appears reactionary in his conclusions. Allowance, too, must be made, as has been rather widely pointed out, for the fact that he was himself injudicious in including so much unscientific material in his *SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATIONS RELATING TO GRAMMAR, LANGUAGE, AND COMPOSITION* (Supplementary Educational Monograph, No. 36, University of Chicago), that should have been eliminated from such a study. His subsequent disappointment was correspondingly great, particularly in the face of resulting criticism. Nevertheless, he has raised a problem that keenly interests the research expert.

III. Those who have been invited to discuss Dr. Greene's report are requested, therefore, to bear in mind questions raised in the comments pointed out above.

A. It is suggested that your discussion include:

1. General comments, very brief, by way of appraisal of the entire report;
2. Definite evaluation of specific phases of the report that seem significantly strong or weak to the reviewer;

3. An answer to this question:
What problem or idea in section * would you single out as most valuable for intensive research? Or, after re-reading section * what problem or idea is suggested to you as most valuable for intensive research?
- B. With a view to being helpful to prospective investigators, analyze the problem as accurately as possible for factors involved which may be subjected to scientific scrutiny and research for solution.
- C. Your discussion should arouse interest in, and give point to research in the field of elementary school composition. It should, further, contribute to the formulation of a research problem for possible (program) consideration by this organization at its next annual meeting.

Among those invited to take part in the discussion were Dr. Ben Wood, of the Bu-

reau of Collegiate Educational Research, Columbia University, and Dr. Guy M. Wilson of the School of Education, Boston University. Neither could be present at the meeting because of conflicting engagements, but both Dr. Wilson and Dr. Wood endorse the work Dr. Greene has done. Dr. Wilson writes:

"Dr. Greene has gone so far beyond me in his study of language that I must simply take off my hat to him and wish him good luck as he goes further. I entirely approve of the research program which he is developing. If carried out successfully and interpreted wisely, it should get us down to bed rock in the matter of curriculum and methods of teaching language. I look upon Dr. Greene's program as having in it the principles of a very fundamental contribution."

Dr. Wood comments in a letter, "I think that his contribution is admirable, and that it should lead to good discussion and promising research."

DISCUSSION

M. R. TRABUE

University of Minnesota

Minneapolis, Minnesota

THE outline of research in the elementary school language field planned and completed by Dr. Harry A. Greene and his students at the University of Iowa makes it evident that Iowa City is now the national capitol for this type of research. If there is an "expert" or an "authority," of the type Dr. Lyman mentions, whose judgment may have "value superior to conclusions based on so-called facts," Dr. Greene is probably the only man who can qualify. He is an authority because of his keen analyses and investigations of the problems in the field, however, rather than because of any popular public appearances or clever publicity.

With characteristic scientific modesty, Dr. Greene has outlined the nature of the research projects conducted at Iowa City without stating the results obtained. I am tremendously anxious to learn what has been found out by Dr. Greene's studies. If

the financial condition of the University of Iowa prevents the early publication of these studies, why could not we who are chiefly interested, subscribe to some fund that would make available at least brief summaries of them? I feel sure that some way could be found to bring a few of the benefits of this remarkable research center to those of us who are unable to work at Iowa City.

The Iowa Oral Language Recording Apparatus is undoubtedly the most dramatic and far-reaching invention yet made, so far as research in oral elementary school language is concerned. It is the key to progress in this field, and Dr. Greene and his associates should be awarded the grand prize for its development. No experimentation or research in oral speech and language hereafter will be convincing, unless this device or an improvement on it has been used in obtaining objective data.

In connection with the measurement of achievement in language, Dr. Greene has pointed out a fact which all of us must recognize and act upon, viz., that the determination of the curriculum is desirable before the measurement of results is carried too far. Twenty years ago, when

*Designated separately for each discussion leader.

I first began to experiment with completion-test exercises for measuring language achievement, I was often deeply chagrined to find teachers a few days later drilling their pupils on how to fill blanks in sentences of the type I had used. We must not allow our measuring instruments to fix the curriculum, and I am pleased to see that Dr. Greene's efforts are placing emphasis where it properly belongs.

In spite of the interesting studies already completed and the list of more than twenty vital problems projected in the field of methods of teaching language, this reviewer would like to see a number of experiments conducted which are not clearly included in the Iowa City program. Is there not a strong possibility that the condition of readiness and the feeling of need in an individual pupil have more to do with his learning of a given language skill than have the types of drill materials used? I should like to see some thorough-going experiments made with a few of the simple, formal elements of written composition, such as the distinction between "may" and "can." I believe that it might be found by careful search that individual boys and girls would master these formal skills very promptly if they were presented at "the psychological moment" when a personal need was felt for them, whereas they usually master them very slowly under the traditional scheme of drills, rules, and exercises administered at arbitrary times, little related to any personal feelings of need possessed by the pupil. In other words, I suggest that we need research to determine whether individual motives may not be more important than instructional devices.

DISCUSSION

E. J. ASHBAUGH

Dean, School of Education

Miami University, Oxford, Ohio

IT SEEMS hardly appropriate for one who has done a relatively small amount of work in this field to attempt to criticize

the very elaborate program which Dr. Greene has set up. The fact that he lists forty-eight Master's and Doctor's theses, completed or under way, shows that he has probably given far more thought to the problem in this field than any of the rest of us; certainly than I myself have done. The basic division into five main types seem to me entirely adequate and perfectly logical. The criticisms which I shall make or the questions I raise are admittedly minor and perhaps scarcely constructive. Nevertheless, if there is to be any discussion of this most excellent paper it is necessary that someone shall raise some questions and perhaps point out apparent weaknesses, even though they are more apparent than real.

Section I of this report, which deals with the development of research techniques, seems to limit itself to the field of oral English. It seems to me that what Dr. Greene states in his first two paragraphs is quite as true for written English as for oral. In fact, he later deals to some extent with the development of research technique in the written field and it seems to me it would have been better if both phases had been acknowledged in this opening part.

In Sections I and III, he points out that the social utility theory of curriculum construction has distinct limitations. I will agree with him that it has limitations but I wonder whether the real meaning of the social utility theory ought to be more definitely expressed in order that wrong inferences may not be drawn. Many of the criticisms that have been directed at the social utility theory of curriculum construction are directed at wrong interpretations and inferences rather than at basic deficiencies in the theory itself. I would suggest, therefore, that in order that everyone should know exactly what Dr. Greene has in mind regarding the limitations of this theory, a somewhat more definite statement of the theory as he understands it might well be made.

In Section I-B, Dr. Greene argues for an analysis of present usage in edi-

torial houses in order that we may know what standards of usage to incorporate into our curriculum work. He states, I believe, that such an analysis, resulting in a definite knowledge of what standards are agreed upon by editorial workers, would enable us to know where to place our emphasis in our teaching procedure. I wonder if there is not another factor which needs to be taken into consideration. We need to know not only where we are in order properly to train students through our curriculum, but likewise in what direction we are going. English is a living language and the criteria which are agreed upon by a majority of editorial workers in 1933 will probably not be the same as those agreed upon by editorial workers ten, fifteen, or twenty years hence. If we could ascertain the direction in which we have been going during the past two, three, or four decades, perhaps longer, it might give us additional information as to which way we are moving and perhaps our emphasis in teaching procedure and curriculum construction might well be placed upon those things which seem to be coming into favor quite as truly as upon those which have arrived and which, in fact, may be really in process of disappearing. At least, I throw the suggestion open to further consideration.

Perhaps this is what Dr. Greene had in mind under item B, Section II, where under discussion of the philosophical background of language he places "trends in social standards in language" as one of the problems for investigation. If so, it is apparent that he is fully cognizant of the issue I have raised, though his discussion in Section I-B, concerning standards for criteria does not indicate it.

In I-C-3 he sets forth six major problems for investigation. Here again, all seem to involve oral language alone. As I read his report I wondered why he should not add a seventh problem, namely, to discover the essential likenesses and differences between oral and written compositions of the same children. In

Section III, in his listing of a supplementary list of problems in the language curriculum, numbers 10, 14, and 18 indicate that he also is quite cognizant of this problem. It seems to me, that that is such a major problem that one ought, in laying out his problems of research, indicate that he is cognizant of it even though he may have reason for postponing any further consideration at that particular point. There is further evidence that he is cognizant of this problem since the studies of Gregerson, Jakeman, Smith and White all attack certain phases of it.

In Section IV, Development and Evaluation of Methods, he states that subject matter must be determined and evaluated before the best ways of teaching can be found experimentally. He then proceeds in the next two or three pages to report studies completed or now under way which have attacked the problem of methods of teaching language. I hope he will not consider me unkind in suggesting that these two things seem somewhat inconsistent, since earlier in his report he has pointed out properly that we have not adequately determined subject matter nor properly evaluated it; nevertheless he is going ahead with studies of teaching method. It has always seemed to me somewhat questionable to subject children to experimental procedure in the efficiency of learning that which we are not sure is worth their while to learn. In the first place, we are not quite sure of the damage we do in teaching children that which it isn't worthwhile to learn. In the second place, the more effectively we teach it, probably the more damage we do. Third, we may not with great assurance assume that the most effective teaching method with inappropriate material will be most effective teaching method when we discover what the appropriate material should be.

Of course, I recognize that we must teach something to these children along the line but I wonder if our experimental effort ought not to follow the line Dr. Greene indicated when he declared that

"Subject matter must be determined and evaluated before the best ways of teaching can be found experimentally."

Under Section V, page 128, he states, "Tests suitable in content and adequately analytical in character cannot be made in any subject until the basic skills are definitely identified and units of instruction on these skills incorporated in the curriculum." He then proceeds to bring in again a number of studies completed and on the way, which infer at least that the basic skills have been definitely identified and units of instruction in these skills have been incorporated in the curriculum.

I am not sure whether or not he will wish to defend that inference.

Let me close as I began. I question whether one who has given so much less thought than Dr. Greene has done to the problems involved is quite competent to criticize his program of research and discussion of problems. I trust that he will accept these questions in the spirit in which they are made, namely, that of highest regard for the work which he has done and a desire only to assist, however little, in the furtherance of the whole program.

(To be concluded)



EARLY AMERICAN WRITERS: ANNA MARIA WELLS

(Continued from page 120)

Over the brook to grandmamma's
The afternoon is fair;
For buttercups gay
Don't stop by the way,—
'Tis high time we were there.

Over the brook to grandmamma's,
And down by the greenwood tree;
In a pleasant spot
Is our grandmamma's cot,
And a dear old lady is she.

Over the brook to grandmamma's,
She is looking for us, I know;
Her table is spread
With honey and bread,
And milk from the brindle cow.

Over the brook to grandmamma's,
A mile or more we've been;
She opens the gate,
That we need not wait;
She longs to let us in.

Over the brook to grandmamma's,
And a kiss for you and for me;
The journey is past,
We're here at last,
And who so happy as we!

TIED TO A CHAIR

Against a chair poor puss was tied,
Holding Georgiana's dolly;
Every now and then she cried
With a mew most melancholy.

Georgiana's sister Lucy,
Trailing round her new broad chain,
Cried, "Come, catch it, pretty pussy,"—
Pussy only mewed again.

Georgia laughed to hear her mew,
Clapped her little hands, and cried,
"Though you bid her play with you,
Pussy cannot, *Pussy's tied*."

"She must stand and hold my doll,
And, to keep her steady there,
That she may not let it fall,
I have tied her to the chair."

Hearing what her children said,
Mamma soon set the pussy free;
Then Miss Georgie hung her head.—
Lucy jumped about for glee.

"Georgie! now let's run away,"
The merry little Lucy cried;
"Yes, my Lucy, you can play,
But Georgie cannot—*Georgie's tied*."

Editorial

"Whose Exterior Substance Doth Belie Thy Soul's Immensity"

WE should not take too seriously that part of Wordsworth's "Ode on Intimations" in which he professes a belief in a previous, and hence a future, immortality; but assuredly we may accept as his creed those passages in the famous ode in which he apotheosizes the child: "Mighty prophet; seer blessed!" And these are words that teachers may well ponder. Not until we cease condescending to children, patronizing them, stop thinking of them merely as "little ones," "tiny tots," as inferior to ourselves because, forsooth, they are smaller and slighter in stature; not until we begin to enjoy, esteem, and respect children as individuals, to regard them as our peers and "good companions," and to realize with Ben Johnson that

It is not growing like a tree

In bulk doth make man better be—
not until then are we in an attitude to deal with children candidly and sagaciously, to make school programs for them, or discern methods of teaching them. And perhaps teachers of English are among those who have violated most shamefully the nature and the quality of childhood. Let me cite some of our pedagogical sins.

Because children are small in "exterior substance," we have assumed that the words in their reading books must be short—"Where ten low words oft creep in one dull line." It is probable that children know and use several times as many words as we permit them to learn in our primers and early readers; and it is almost certain that they relish generous, mouth-filling, jaw-breaking words. So far as children's taste is concerned, I would guess that the Thorndike list is not so good as the Mother Goose list. That wise bird catered to children's pleas-

ure in expansive, oratund polysyllables.

And, again to match their size, we insist that the sentences in children's readers and the sentences we have them write, should be short. In consequence, in most made-to-order children's books, and in children's own writing, the sentences are staccato. The sentences are jerky. The sentences are choppy. The sentences are monotonous. They lack rise and fall, ebb and flow, rhythm and cadence. They are not good sentences, judged by discriminating adult standards; how can they then be good sentences for children? Children like "nice big" sentences, with plenty of *and's*, and *then's*, and they are as fond of "so-o-o's" as Ed Wynn. When they grow older and are capable of making more complicated sentence patterns—and not until then—we should induct them into the mysteries of sentence structure. If there be a "sentence sense," we do not educate it by forcing children to use unnaturally short, childish sentences.

This reasoning applies also to the "compositions" we train children to write in the lower grades, these three-sentence stories we thrust upon them as models. "I have a cat. He is black. I like my cat." This is sheer inanity—and children are not naturally inane, whatever else they may be. Nor is it the children who are at fault; it is ourselves. We seem to argue that because children have small hands, they must write small stories. Give the children a chance to tell their stories in their own fashion, real or imaginary, and then get set for a long-winded, far-ranging chronicle of epic proportions, grandiose, hugeous, magniloquent. And if we contend that children cannot, because of mechanical difficulties, write long stories, the retort is obvious: "Why

have them *write* stories at all?" Let them learn to engage skilfully in that language behavior, in those language activities that are important to them, important to them as members of that variety of human being called "children."

Our lack of respect for the child is revealed also in our so-called "creative work." We wish the child to make nice little poems, sweet little paintings, sentimental, petty, trivial things, of no robustness or scope. We want him to write about flowers and birds. And lambs! We had best leave the lambs to William Blake and William Wordsworth. When shall we learn that the making of little, cameo-like works of art is one of the most difficult feats we can exact of the artist? Let the child have a chance to cut loose, to do things in a big way, his way. He won't do it? Then he isn't ready for creative work. To cajole or to coerce him into creative work and then cramp his style,

to ply him with finger exercises when his arms fairly ache to sweep and pounce—and pound—surely this is violating the essential nature of childhood.

"Thou whose exterior substance doth belie thy soul's immensity." The most certain way to belittle children is to confuse their physical littleness with psychical littleness. The National Council of Teachers of English, through its membership in Elementary English, could have no higher or more rewarding task than to discover children, their nature and quality, their interests and tastes and talents—theirs, not what we would substitute for them, and then to follow respectfully the activities of their soul's immensity. Then the triviality, the thinness, the meagerness, the littleness of our present program would be manifest.

WALTER BARNES

President of the National Council
of Teachers of English.



Reviews and Abstracts

KARL AND GRETTEL, *Children of the Fatherland*. Virginia Olcott. Illustrated by Constance Whittemore. Silver, Burdett and Company, 1932. 80c.

Any teacher who has, since her childhood, been associated with dull school books—dull in style, in illustration, in binding, and above all, dull in interest—must feel a lively and almost personal sense of gratitude for the stories of children of other lands by Virginia Olcott, the third of which appeared recently.

Each volume of this series is attractive in its own way; ANTON AND TRINI presented lively and valuable material on Switzerland; JEAN AND FANCHON was as French as the names of its hero and heroine. Now this third volume, KARL AND GRETTEL, gives children Germany—the witch-fires on the Brocken, the Spreewald, a doll from the Black Forest, Christmas preparations in the Peace Valley, and the "Wandering Birds."

While it is true that the device of presenting information to children through fictitious characters has been used often with indifferent results, Miss Olcott's books escape the odium that clung to di-

dactic volumes of other years. It is not hard to understand why. Miss Olcott really likes the little Antons and Fanchons and Karls, and thoroughly enjoys the countries she describes. Thus her zest for people, customs, and traditions carries over, undimmed, into her books, and with Van Loon, Beebe, and others, she helps to dispel the notion that expository writing is dull.

KARL AND GRETTEL has other points of excellence, however, besides the absorbing text. Like the other volumes in the series, it is illustrated by the incomparable Constance Whittemore. Miss Whittemore is evidently acquainted with some chameleon trick of turning herself Swiss, French, or German at will. The atmosphere of the pictures in this volume are distinctly German. The illustrations possess the simplicity of line and mass so desirable in children's books.

As in other books of the series, the author includes folk-songs of the country in translation—an interesting and valuable feature. The volume is "laid out" with more than usual attention to artistic format—good leading, ample margins, and well-designed pages.

D. B.